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Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
Raised Bill 945 - An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education
Raised Bill 948 – An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut
Raised Bill 886 An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations Concerning Education
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My name is Daisy Torres. I am the President-Elect of the Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (CALAS). Our association is a non-profit organization committed to achieve Latino educator/student advancement and supports. CALAS is one of seventeen state affiliates of the national organization ALAS, the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents. The mission of CALAS is to foster quality and equitable public education for Latino Connecticut students as it seeks to inspire, cultivate, develop and support Hispanic/Latino educational leaders and talent. Our membership is representative of 25 districts (Amity Region 5, Bridgeport, Brookfield, CREC, CTHSS, Danbury, Fairfield, Greenwich, Hamden, Hartford, LEARN, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Plainville, Region 12, Stratford, Thomaston, Waterbury, Windham, Windsor). Among the members there are superintendents, assistant superintendents, cabinet level administrators, principals, assistant principals, deans of students, directors, supervisors, counselors, social workers, department heads, teachers, and aspiring teachers/administrators.

CALAS SUPPORTS Raised Bill 945 - An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the
Department of Education

The Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents strongly supports the additional flexibilities for bilingual teacher certification requirements. With more than 90,000 Connecticut public school students reporting a native language other than English at home and more than a quarter of English learners enrolled in transitional bilingual and dual language programs throughout the state (cite source), the critical need for quality bilingual education programs, taught by certified bilingual teachers, is critical now more than ever.



Teacher candidates for bilingual education, who have earned a bachelor's degree, or its equivalent, from a regionally accredited institution of higher education in which the language of instruction is in English, will now be eligible for bilingual certification as a result of this proposed bill. Additionally, the expansion of bilingual certification up to grade 9 and the authorization to teach secondary bilingual humanities and secondary bilingual science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses will be crucial factors to the state's commitment in the recruitment and retention of bilingual educators.

Nearly one in six kindergartners is learning English while they continue to develop in their home language. Research suggests that ELs learn best in environments that support the acquisition of English and continued development of their home language (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The flexibilities to bilingual teacher certification requirements will benefit many districts who seek to begin or expand bilingual or dual language programming to better serve our growing population of bilingual learners in Connecticut.

CALAS SUPPORTS Raised Bill 948 – An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut

CALAS strongly supports equitable school funding that reflects the critical needs of English Learners and children in low-income communities in the state of Connecticut. English Learners are the fastest growing group in the United States and require funding that addresses the opportunity gaps for these students. Connecticut's English Learner population has grown by nearly 13,000 students, while the state's total enrollment has decreased. As a result of this growth, Connecticut public schools currently educate more than 43,500 English Learners, of which more than 47.5 percent of students are concentrated in districts with the majority of students identifying as non-white. This proposed bill will provide additional funding to district by increasing the formula's concentrated poverty weight from 5 percent to 15 percent for each student from low income communities (School and State Finance Project, 2021).

Additionally, this proposed bill will support the 20 local school districts currently serving student populations that are more than 50 percent economically disadvantaged. Currently, only 5 school districts are currently eligible for ECS, while many of Connecticut's largest and highest-needs districts are excluded, including Bridgeport, New Britain, and New Haven, cities with high numbers of English Learners. Moreover, the ECS eligibility threshold will be lowered from 75 percent to 60 percent to provide the necessary supports, services, and opportunities to the state's highest-need districts (School and State Finance Project, 2021).

Increased school funding is imperative to ensure we are equitably supporting schools that serve predominately black, Latino and low income students in the state of Connecticut. We applaud the inclusion of this proposed bill to public hearing and we fully support it.



CALAS OPPOSES Raised Bill 886 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education

CALAS strongly opposes the Governor's budget proposal that aims to freeze the ECS funding formula in lieu of utilizing federal funds designated to address learning loss as a result of school closures due to the pandemic. The interruption to student learning will have long-lasting effects that will require additional funding to support summer and intervention programs that promotes student learning and growth, particularly for many disengaged students who have been learning remotely.

Several Connecticut districts are inadequately funded to meet or exceed state assessment standards and as a result, there continues to be large disparities in spending across school districts (The CT Post, 2012). Now more than ever, districts need more resources and support, not less, and this proposed budget will negatively affect thousands of students in our state. Federal funding should not supplant current funding sources that many districts rely on, particularly in urban settings. It is our hope that you will strongly consider the impact this proposed bill will have on our Connecticut public school students.

Thank you for considering my testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents.